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SCENIC HIGHWAYS ELEMENT

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SCENIC HIGHWAY ELEMENT

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Highways

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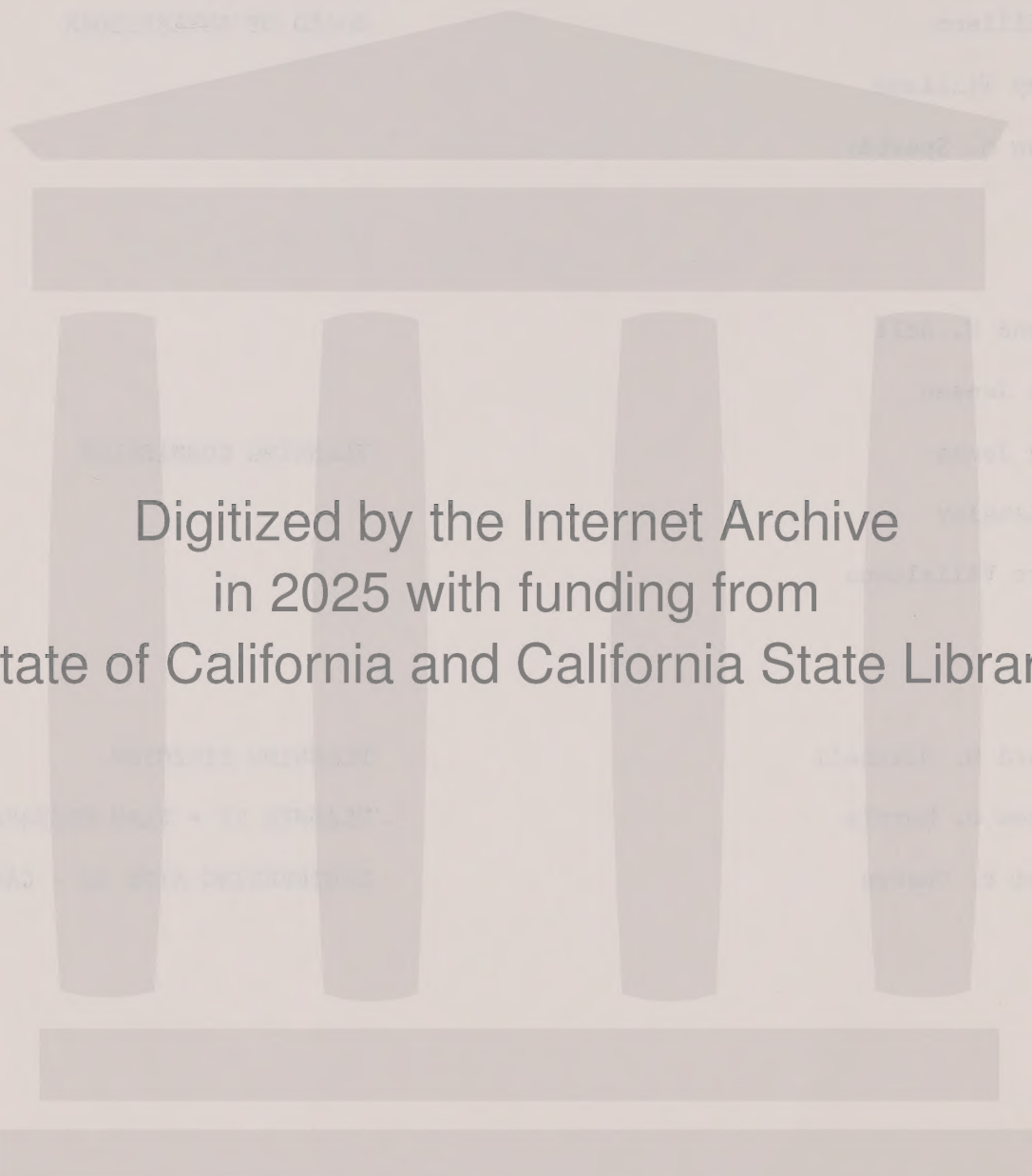
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SCENIC HIGHWAYS ELEMENT

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SCENIC HIGHWAYS

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INTRODUCTION

Several years ago there was a movie billed as the story of a man who went looking for America and couldn't find it. The reason that he couldn't find America may have been due to the signboards which have hidden many scenic portions of our nation. Shortly before the picture was released, Mrs. Lyndon Johnson launched a nationwide campaign to beautify America. One of the major goals of this campaign was the elimination or reduction of billboards along scenic routes.

In conjunction with this, the national scenic highways program was given renewed status in 1966 by the formation of the Council on Recreation and Natural Beauty. It received a Department of Commerce Study on a proposed system of Scenic Roads and Parkways and the publication and publicity of this study gave an emphasis to the utilization and appreciation of America's scenic resources.

As part of the increased awareness and concern for America's Scenic Wonders, the State of California passed legislation requiring local governments to add scenic highway elements to their general plans.

GENERAL

Definition of Scenic Highways

Scenic Highways can be interpreted by defining the component words. Scenic views are views which are beautiful, interesting, or sites that are historical or otherwise unique, and are places that people wish to see.

Highways are partially defined in the State Outdoor Advertising Act of 1973 as: "roads, streets, boulevards, lanes, courts, places, commons, trails, ways or other rights of way or easements used for or laid out and intended for the public passage of vehicles or of vehicles and persons."

This definition could be expanded to include scenic air and water ways in order that scenic qualities might more easily be enjoyed within Imperial County.

Any road, park land, public land, wildlife refuge or other property presently utilized by the public for transportation purposes is appropriate for inclusion in the scenic highways element.

Functions of the Scenic Highway

A Scenic Highway serves essentially three (3) basic functions:

1. To satisfy the human need for aesthetic and recreational amenities;
2. To promote scenic utilization of unique natural resource formations, desert landscapes, water-related environments, historical sites, and scenic vistas;
3. To link various scenic areas of Imperial County through a series of routes.

The Scenic Highways Element is intended to provide a systematic opportunity for enjoying the complete visual, cultural and aesthetic repertoire of Imperial County.

One philosophy can be paraphrased "tourists will seek not only a pleasant destination, but a memorable journey as well. Since most of

them will come by automobile, the highway should be the focus for their reception and enjoyment. This is a new era of recreation-creating highway experiences. But this emphasis is overdue in respect to accomodating the motoring tourist."

The maximum scenic utilization of natural corridors is important. This legitimate concern should receive major attention as more and more tourists and county residents drive along these corridors for business and recreational purposes. The design of new roads in Imperial County (by any jurisdiction) should utilize various approaches and techniques to maximize appreciation of our scenic resources.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Legislation

In 1973 the California Legislature added several paragraphs to Article 5 of the local planning law (Title 7, Chapter 3). One of these paragraphs, Section 65302(h), required:

"A scenic highway element for the development, establishment, and protection of scenic highways pursuant to the provisions of Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 260) of Chapter 2 of Division 1 of the Streets and Highways Code."

This element is to fulfill this requirement. The official recognition and protection of Imperial County's "scenic assets" constitutes the initial step of a systematic process. An intermediate phase will include development of appropriate priority portions of the scenic highway system. The final stage will result in State Scenic Highway status being established for the accepted segments.

Effect of Legislation

The Role of the Scenic Highway Element

The Scenic Highway Element is to be a basis for county policy. This policy should address development standards, scenic easements, property acquisition, zoning and multiple modes of scenic recreational travel.

Applicability

The Scenic Highways Element applies to all unincorporated land within the county; each incorporated municipality is to adopt an individual Scenic Highways Element for the land within its boundaries. The County Scenic Highways Element and those prepared by the cities should not conflict, but should be mutually supportive.

Prior to the final implementation stages, routes designated as scenic, should be designated as County Scenic Ways. This action would display pride of residents who enjoy living in a community that cares about its visual impact on all.

The Scenic Highway Guidelines can be interpreted in at least two ways:

1. to classify routes that are to be proposed as a part of the statewide system;
2. to classify routes that are to be a part of the local Scenic Highway System which would include special features.

Relationship to Other Elements

The Scenic Highways Element is directly related to the Open Space and the Circulation/Transportation Elements. A direct relationship also exists between the Scenic Highways and Land Use segments of the General Plan.

Relationship to Environmental Impact Reports

The environmental impact of all projects will determine the effect on scenic highways. Those activities that have an adverse impact on the highways or are contrary to the goals of this element will be denied.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

LEGAL STATUS

The establishment of scenic highways should include necessary implementation techniques of billboard control, scenic easement acquisition, and right-of-way purchase for all modes of travel. These activities are consistent with the legislative intent, as articulated by official state documents and guidelines.

The appropriate implementation of state policy and mandate must be carried out by local government. The elimination or reduction of objectionable uses may be carried out as legitimate activity. A legal precedent for implementing community beautification goals through zoning and other police powers was established when the U. S. Supreme Court stated, It is within the power of the legislature to determine that the community should be beautiful as well as healthy, spacious as well as clean...The values it represents are spiritual as well as physical...aesthetic as well as monetary.

ISSUES

1. The county has a moral and legal responsibility to preserve and protect scenic corridors adjacent to highways within its boundaries.
2. The county has the opportunity to develop all modes of scenic recreational travel within its boundaries.

GOALS

1. To establish various systems of scenic recreational travel, utilizing multiple transportation modes.
2. The preservation, enhancement and protection of Imperial County's scenic resources by appropriate controls.

OBJECTIVES

1. The development of public resources, and the guiding of development through public constraints.
2. Development of multiple modes of scenic travel through acquisition, public works, and vegetation utilization.
3. Utilization of controls strategies to preserve and protect the area's scenic resources.
4. Utilization of zoning to reduce the potential of billboard pollution along Scenic Highways.
5. Acquire scenic easements from private owners when required.
6. Acquire private property through negotiation or eminent domain.
7. Develop standards for aesthetically valuable sites. Design review may be required so that structures, facilities, and activities properly merge with the environment.

POTENTIAL SCENIC HIGHWAYS

HIGHWAYS

Interstate 8

A portion of Interstate 8 is in the Master Plan for future inclusion in the California Scenic Highway system. The initial segment for future status lies between the San Diego County line and its junction with State

Highway 98. This segment known as Mountain Springs grade has a long, rapid elevation change, remarkable and plant life variations within the highway corridor.

State Highway 78

Anza-Borrego Desert

The master plan of state highways eligible for official scenic highway designation now includes State Highway 78 from the junction with Highway 86 to the San Diego County line. The area is considered scenic because of its desert characteristics.

State Highway 111

Highway 111, which travels along the northeast shore of the Salton Sea is included in the State Master Plan for Scenic Highways from Bombay Beach to the County line. The drive along the man re-created body of water is a study in primitive beauty.

The appearance of a large body of water in a desert below sea level is an interesting and startling anomaly. The contrast between the flat, wide Salton Sea with its sandy beach, and the rugged rise of the Chocolate Mountains has many variations. The panoramic view of the opposite (south-west) shore and its backdrop of mountains is also a sight of pre-historic beauty.

Salton-Borrego Seaway

County Highway S-22 is also known as the Salton-Borrego Seaway. This route begins in Salton City and ends in the Borrego Valley in San Diego County.

Clay Point is located a mile and a half west of State 86 on the Seaway.

It is a formation ring above the flat desert shore which shows the bed of pre-Columbian Lake Coahuilia.

Two and a half miles further west is the junction with Truckhaven Trail, which also originates in Salton City.

Less than a mile further, the Anza Verde Wash parallels the Salton-Borrego Seaway. The three miles of road in Imperial County is typical of low altitude rain-shadow deserts, with flora and fauna that is usually found only in arid lands.

SCENIC AIRWAYS

The many varied designs, formations and colors of Imperial County's landscape take on a different perspective when viewed from the air. Many sites, inter-relationships, and colors might never be seen without air access. The design of a series of flying courses, allowing observation of scenic views, navigational practice, and channelization of "color-tour" traffic would meet the needs for a scenic air(high)way system.

POLICIES

SCENIC HIGHWAYS

Connecting Route Concept

The Scenic Highway System of Imperial can follow the "connecting route" concept, that of being the transportation medium between areas appropriate for pedestrian sight-seeing. Routes designated as a point-to-point system for local sight-seers and tourists could use interstate, state or county roads.

One example of this could be Interstate 8. This route enters the county with a scenic turnout which the Division has partially developed.

Scenic Route Status

These scenic routes can be designated by a distinctive county route symbol. This type of route symbol is exempt from sign regulations (Section 5221).

Scenic corridors along federal, state, and county highways could also merit "scenic route" status in county plans and publications.

Enhancement of Scenic Routes

The enhancement of scenic routes can be done through various strategies. Development standards for proposed projects would encourage building with the landscape, not in contrast to it.

Various protection activities benefiting the environment, such as publicly - organized litter clean-ups would minimize the negative impact of civilization in these scenic wildernesses. The use of zoning, particularly in regards to billboards would prevent beautiful scenes and vistas from being marred by signs which are as out of place in many natural settings.

SCENIC AIRWAYS

The many varied designs formation and colors of Imperial County's landscape take on a different perspective when viewed from the air. Many sites, designs, natural formations, locational inter-relationships, and unusual colors might never be seen or appreciated without air access. A group of air routes allowing scenic enjoyment, giving navigational practice, and channelizing tourist air traffic would be suitable for designation as a scenic airway system.

IMPLEMENTATION

HIGHWAYS

Scenic Highways to be Designated

The portion of Interstate 8 from Ocotillo to the San Diego County line, State Highway 111 from Bombay Beach to the Riverside County line and State Highway 78 from its junction with Highway 86 to the San Diego County line are currently in the Master Plan of Scenic Highways.

The Planning Commission shall file the necessary applications with the California Department of Transportation for the following route which has not received Scenic Highway designation:

County Highway S-22 from the Salton Sea Country Club to the San Diego County line.

Plans to Elevate and Enhance the Scenic Route

Other than land use controls, all efforts to aesthetically elevate and enhance the Scenic Highway Routes in Imperial County should be approved by the Planning Commission. Recommendations to the Planning Commission should be submitted by appropriate agencies.

Signs

The main thrust of the scenic highway and beautification projects involves the regulation of signs which may be seen from the public right-of-way.

The matter may be considered in four parts: (1) BLM retention of a non-billboard policy on its lands in proximity to scenic routes, (2) revenue regulation, (3) aesthetic-permit for existence regulation, (4) sign considerations in conjunction with land use regulation (via the zoning ordinance).

Range

The scope of these regulations may include all off-site advertising that may be seen from a highway.

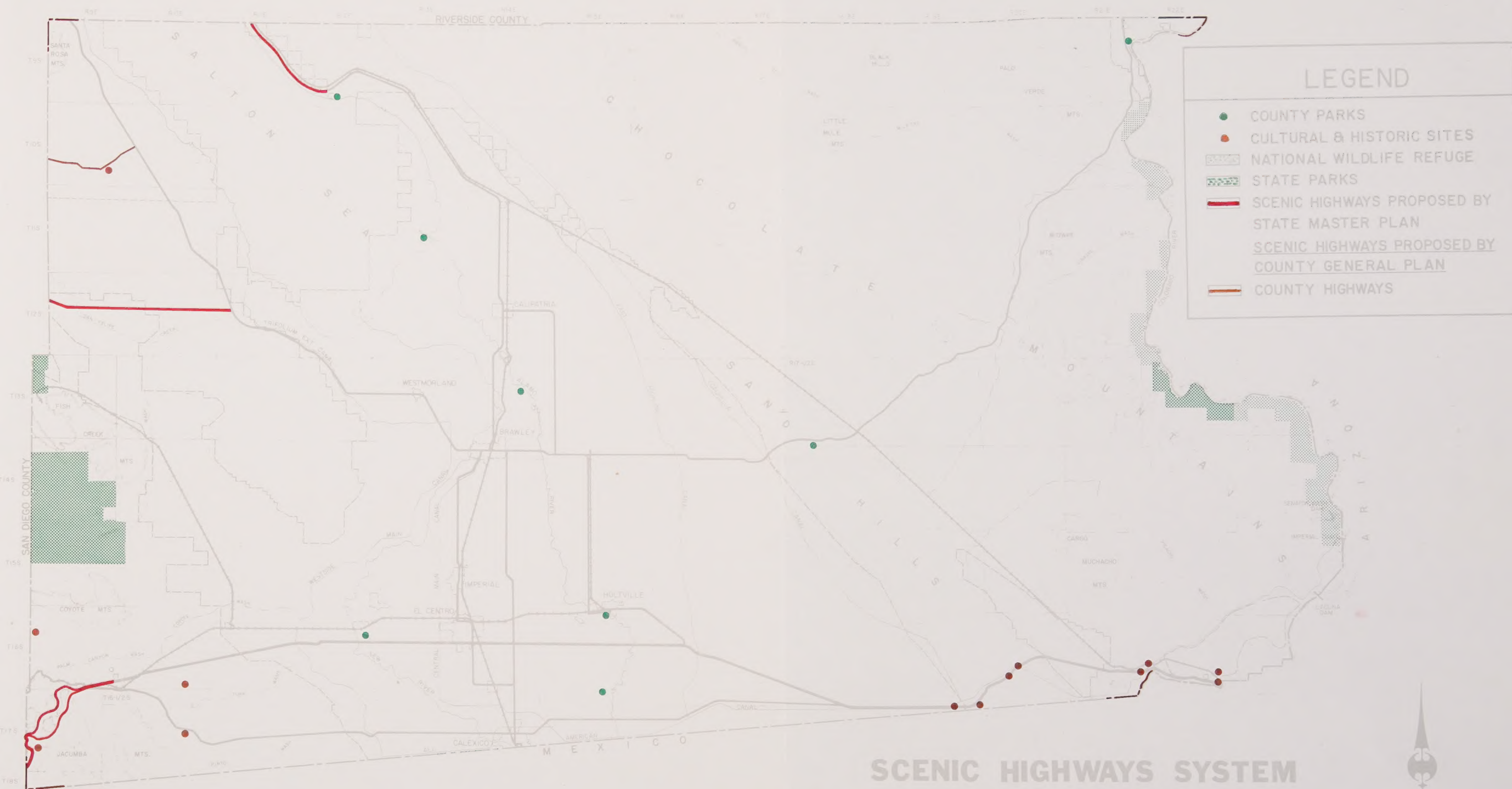
The granting of a permit for sign, outdoor advertising structure, or other medium of off-site advertising which is deemed inconsistent and/or with the scenic activities of the county could be appealed to the Planning Commission.

Regulations

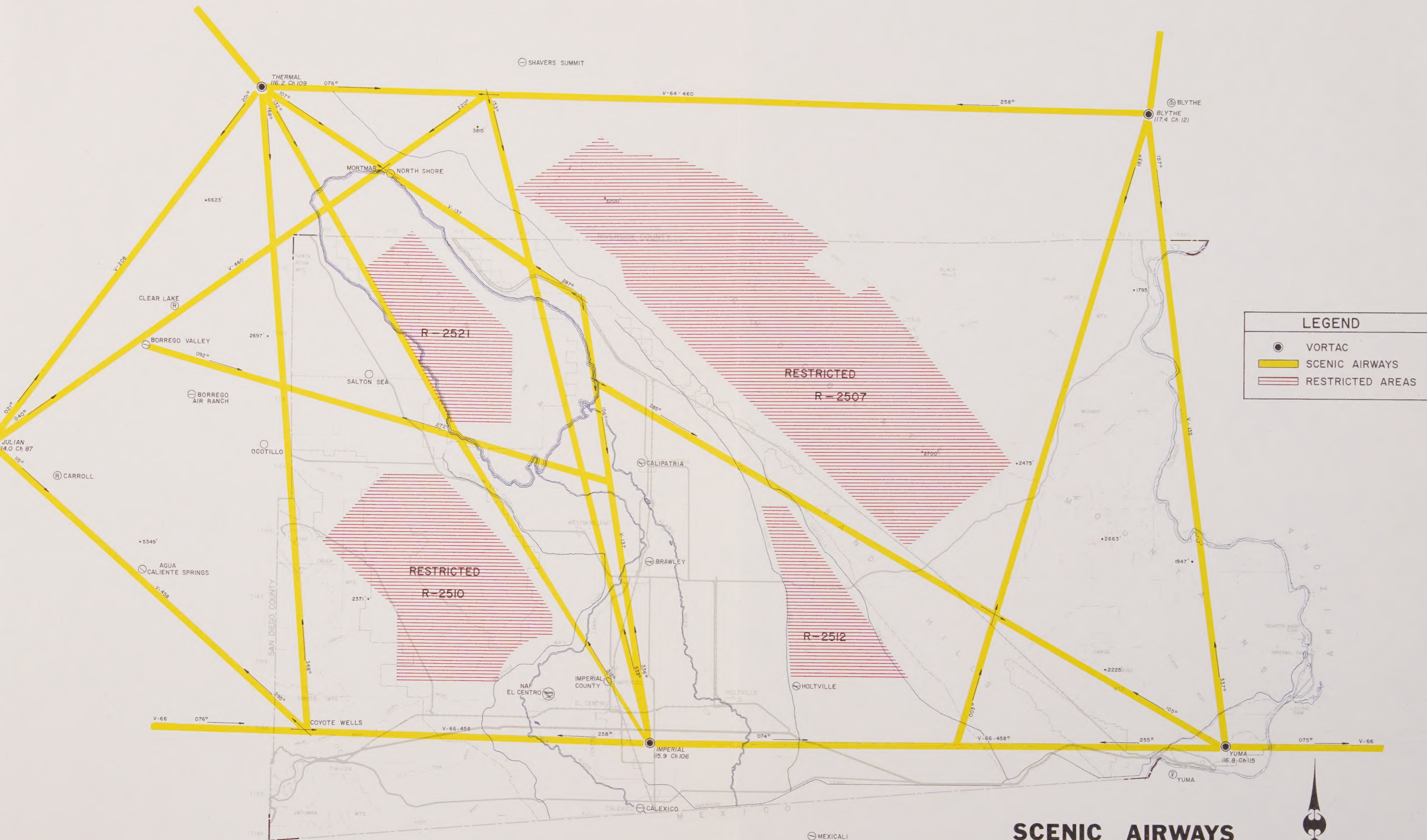
County policy will be implemented in the future by Board approved regulations and guidelines for all county departments.

SCENIC AIRWAYS

The Scenic Airways should allow enjoyment and recreation through viewing scenic beauty from an unparalleled viewpoint. Many of the varied and unusual colors, designs and formations found in Imperial County can only be discovered from the air.



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SCALE IN MILES



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BY THE PARKS & RECREATION & PLANNING
DEPARTMENTS OF IMPERIAL COUNTY.

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